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THE HALIOTIS.

BY JOSIAH KEEP,

President Isaac Lea Chapter, Agassiz Association.

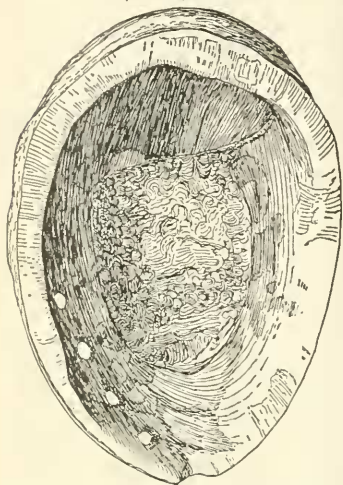
The Haliotis is the largest and finest Mollusk that is found on the coast of California. While its shell is a valuable article of commerce, its flesh is good for food, though perhaps few people except Chinese and Indians ever indulge in that luxury. I can speak from experience however, and am ready to affirm that "abalone soup," well made, is fit for the table of the most fastidious.

The Indians have nearly all disappeared from the coast now, but only a hundred years ago they were numerous enough, and for how many centuries before that time they had abounded in California is a question for the archæologists. Certain it is that along the shores where these mollusks now live there are untold numbers of Haliotis shells in all stages of decomposition. They were not washed up by the waves either, for they lie on the banks above the reach of the ocean. Besides this, stone mortars and other relics of savage men are occasionally found with the old shells. Evidently the Indians were accustomed to gather the mollusks from their haunts on the rocks and use their flesh for food. After the savage repast was over they threw away the beautiful shells.

This work went on for centuries, and to-day the railroad cuttings along the coast expose to view banks of mingled earth and pearl, several feet in thickness. It makes a conchologist's heart ache to find bushels of what were once magnificent specimens now all in ruins, and to think how little they were prized by those who had such excellent opportunities for collecting. But we will not blame them, poor sons of the forest; at least they knew how to satisfy their

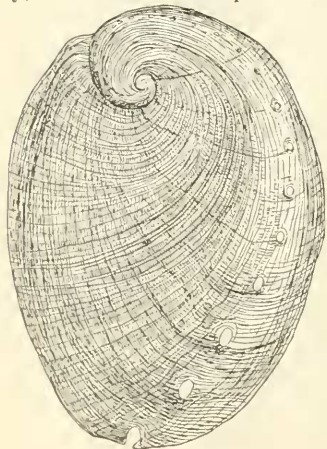
hunger in an approved manner, and sometimes they made ornaments from the discarded shells.

There are three species of *Haliotis* found in large numbers on the coast of California, though all three do not abound in the same locality. The southern species, *H. splendens*, is never found north of Monterey Bay, and I have seen only one specimen from that body of water. That one, however, was a genuine *splendens*, and I know almost the rock from which it was taken. I dissected the creature, which was evidently an aged individual, and the shell is now in my cabinet. This species is found abundantly farther south, around Santa Barbara and San Diego. It is really the most beautiful of the three, though its shell is too thin for some kinds of work. The magnificently mottled green pearl of the great muscle scar reminds one of the full glory of a peacock's expanded tail.



H. splendens.

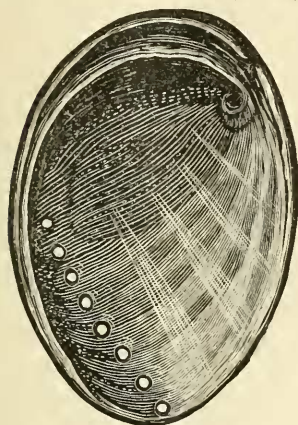
On the shores of central and northern California the other two species abound. *H. rufescens* sometimes has a shell as large as a dinner plate, but common specimens are only six or eight inches long. The outer layer of the shell is of a red color, while the inner or nacreous portion is beautifully iridescent. On account of their solidity, the shells of this species are specially fitted for making jewelry and pearl ornaments. These mollusks are captured by Chinese boatmen, who row along near the rocks, when the tide is low, and peer curiously down into all the cracks and clefts where these great creatures hide. When one is discovered, a wedge on the end of a pole is employed to suddenly dislodge the poor mollusk from his strong hold, and a boat-hook draws him up from the water into the hands of his enemy.



H. rufescens.

The third species, *H. Cracherodii* is the most common of all and is also the smallest, though it some-

times assumes noble proportions. You can find them under stones or in out-of-the-way places among the rocks if you search when the tide is low. All of these mollusks, in fact, are rock lovers, and it is idle to seek for them except among the crags or broken boulders. It is exceedingly interesting to capture a good-sized fellow and watch his mode of locomotion.



H. Cracherodii.

When placed on a smooth rock he moves along at no snail's pace, but strides on like an elephant. Not quite so fast, to be sure, but the motion of his body, slightly swaying from side to side, and the tremendous muscular force which he evidently exerts cause one to involuntarily compare his gait to that of the great proboscidian. And as for that matter, our mollusk also has a thick, black proboscis, of no mean proportions.

The Haliotis, in short, is the noblest mollusk of our coast, if not of America. Of prodigious muscular power, quick and active in movement, guided by keen instincts, supplying nourishing food to man, and above all yielding a shell beautiful as the rainbow, it deserves an honorable place in the list of our important genera.

Very fine green pearls, almost rivaling the product of the pearl-oyster are sometimes taken from its mantle, and when its superior organization is considered, it is certainly far in advance of its headless neighbor. Every young collector should be sure to get good specimens of California "abalone" shells and those who are fortunate enough to visit the haunts of these creatures should endeavor to learn more of their habits, and observe their curious structure and interesting movements.

NEW VARIETIES OF PATULA STRIGOSA.

BY HENRY HEMPHILL.

Patula strigosa var. *carnea*.

Shell umbilicated, greatly depressed, dark horn-color, rather solid, shining, surface somewhat uneven and covered with irregular